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Chapter 2

Maritta Törrönen

Creating Wellbeing Through Reciprocal Relationships

Abstract

This chapter discusses reciprocity in connection to wellbeing and welfare. The underlying idea suggests that reciprocal relations take place between individuals, communities and even societies. Wellbeing and also welfare in these relations can be depicted as dependent on how equally resources are shared, how people are respected and what kind of real possibilities they have to choose. These questions are framed by practical, symbolic and moral dimensions of reciprocity. They clarify the importance of people's social commitments and the need to transfer from individualistic services to empowerment at a community level.

Introduction

This chapter discusses reciprocity in connection with wellbeing and welfare and depicts how it can be theoretically understood with respect to social work and social policy practices which together create a social care system in a society. It critically analyses the power relationships and promotes the view that equality between different partners creates wellbeing and welfare. Thus, reciprocal social work challenges the well-known power combination between the social worker or caregiver and the user of services, client or the care recipient. Similarly, with respect to social policy, the welfare state and the institutions are understood to supplement the mutual support of individuals on the societal level, for instance in the form of social security. There are regulations and norms, which tell us about the responsibilities and the duties of citizens but also indicate what kinds of rights and privileges they have in a certain society (Gouldner (1960, p. 169).

Reciprocity becomes visible when different communities imply different reciprocities of mutual help among their members, and between each member and their community. Especially, a family is usually seen as a primary source of reciprocal services and affection. Moreover, the political and public sector as well as the idea of

a welfare state include various indicators of reciprocity traditionally in various forms of help, e.g. health, pension and education. (Kolm 2008, pp. 1–2.)

‘For instance, a free, peaceful and efficient society requires the mutual respect of persons and properties – the police and self-defence could not suffice and are costly – and people would or could not so respect others if they were not themselves respected. This permits, in particular, the working of markets and organisations, which also requires a minimum of trust, honesty, promise keeping, or fairness – and mutual help in organisations –, which can only be reciprocal.’ (Kolm 2008, p. 1)

Good social relationships are sustained by reciprocity, which is not supported by oppressive norms but instead is a balanced and fair set of free helpful acts. These reinforce emotional bonds and their intensities. (Kolm 2008, 2.)

If reciprocity is based on equality, it creates a feeling of companionship, friendship or solidarity and helps people behave well towards each other. This, in turn, affects collective wellbeing and is a prerequisite for a caring democracy that diminishes inequality and increases one’s quality of life. In social services, this means meeting people with respect, supporting their empowerment and increasing their wellbeing. Reciprocity includes actions that support one’s self-interest and also actions without an immediate benefit that are more universal, namely actions that incorporate the idea of all human beings as brothers or sisters (see Niiniluoto 2015).

In the book *Reciprocity*, which discusses political philosophy, Becker (1990, p. 4) states that the concept of reciprocity is so broad that it is difficult to come to a consensus regarding its definition. For some, reciprocity simply refers to less direct or exact returns ‘in kind’ but others may use it to refer to indirect or not in-kind exchanges. There is no consensus on whether it is an obligation or an ideal; whether it demands retaliation or good for good; whether it is connected to the concept of justice or whether it conflicts with benevolence (*ibid.*, p. 4). Since also life can be viewed as complicated and often contradictory, as Bourdieu (1990, p. 139) puts it, ‘The complexity lies in the social reality’, the concepts of reciprocity contain many components, too. Some also use ‘reciprocity’ when referring to its opposite as non-reciprocity, when one revenges or acts badly towards others (for instance see Pereira *et al.* 2005).

In this chapter, reciprocity is understood as a positive concept, which can refer to direct or indirect exchange between individuals, communities, and societies. I understand reciprocal acts, i.e. fairness, justice or good behaviour, as ideals. Moreover, the aims of the welfare state and with respect to the everyday-life interactions, reciprocity supports the wellbeing of both people and their communities. However, reciprocal acts might also sometimes entail a feeling resembling an obligation, and thus include negative features, which seems to limit the freedom to choose. However, this may indicate my understanding of life and how it simultaneously contains happiness and sorrow, as well as justice and injustice.

In recognition of the complex nature of reciprocity, in this chapter I will draw on the social sciences and philosophy to develop my own conceptualisation of reciprocity that includes my proposed dimensions, namely *practical*, *symbolic* and *moral*. These aspects clarify the power relationships: how are the resources divided between people (practical dimension), who are accepted as part of the group or society (symbolic dimension) and who have real possibilities to choose (moral dimension). In my earlier writings of reciprocity, I have noticed that most authors connect reciprocity to other concepts, e.g. the quality of an interaction or use it interchangeably with non-reciprocity. In my view, the social-scientific definition of reciprocity, including both social work and social policy, in its most accurate form addresses the wellbeing of humans and manages to simultaneously include all of the following elements: survival, togetherness and morality.

These ideas of reciprocity, which are based on the understanding that human beings are interdependent, serve as criticisms of the current global trends that demand complete self-sufficiency from people or similarly focus on their own economic prosperity (see Nussbaum 2011, pp. 10, 29; Sen 2009). Therefore, reciprocity is not only accepting that people are equal; it is also understanding that they have a voice which can be heard (Brooks 2012, p. 28). In other words, people are met in similar situations justly but also differently when they have special needs. In addition to exploring reciprocity, this chapter outlines the arguments against the idea that human beings always choose whatever will benefit themselves the most (see also Nussbaum 2011, pp. 10, 29, Sen 2009). This chapter will indicate the complexity of human cooperation, which is a combination of selfishness or self-interest and integrity, the

act of surpassing one's own interests and relying on reciprocity in the ongoing negotiations of everyday life.

The Idea of Reciprocity

Every society has norms of reciprocity. Examples include gift-giving rituals between lovers and friends, patterns of family life, the obligations of citizenship, and contracts. The details vary by time and place but there is always some understanding of reciprocity and an intricate etiquette. Becker points out that reciprocity is often associated with utility or obligation; a benefit that has not been requested by the recipients obligates them to return the favour. It also appears that the greater the nature of the benevolent action, the stronger the sense of obligation to repay it in kind. The obligation may be viewed as oppressive, a source of resentment, or a source of delight, and these feelings can be either volatile or stable. This kind of alternation is a normal part of life and does not eliminate social injustice (Becker 1990, p. 73.)

Positively understood reciprocity contains the assumption that good acts accumulate reciprocally and that people can treat each other well. This is interlinked with the impression that human beings have universal characteristics all over the world. In the history of Western thought, such a suggestion is often defended with religious arguments (Niiniluoto 2015, pp. 277–278). Becker's concept of reciprocity has a religious slant, although it can also be understood as an ethical norm for human beings:

'... that we should return good for good, in proportion to what we receive; that we should resist evil, but not do evil in return; that we should make reparation for the harm we do; and that we should be disposed to do those things as a matter of moral obligation.' (Becker 1990, p. 4)

Becker's definition views reciprocity as containing elements of both what we can do and what we ought to do. His definition of reciprocity argues first, that we owe a return for all the good we receive; it does not infer that we have to accept the good we have received. Second, although reciprocity should not be understood as obligatory, it may dispose the receiver towards reciprocation. Third, the sense of obligation may not be apparent at the moment of the reciprocal action but the receiver may feel retrospectively that he or she has to return good with good. Reciprocity may be

viewed as a debt that cannot be repaid and as a mortgage on the love of one's beloved relatives and friends (Becker 1990, pp. 4–6).

Becker's definition is similar to the 'Golden Rule', which is espoused in many religions. For Christians, this is defined by the following words of Jesus: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. The Golden Rule is sometimes understood as reciprocal egoism; it combines service and the debt of gratitude in a similar way to a business negotiation (Niiniluoto 2015, pp. 277–278). It guides us to think not only of our own benefit but also of how we behave towards other people.

If reciprocity is a source of wellbeing or welfare, its opposite non-reciprocity can be deemed as harmful and thus to decrease wellbeing and willingness to commit to solidary actions. It does not support the actions which create equality nor participation. Reciprocity correlates with long and predictable relationships and with trust while non-reciprocity expresses distrust, which alienates people and decreases their willingness to help and support each other (see Harisalo and Miettinen 2010, pp. 13–15, 23, see also Kouvo 2010, p. 171).

On the individual level, non-reciprocity means that a person or a group of people value themselves over someone else. In other words, they protect their own interests and behave badly towards others, e.g. they bully, hate or act mean towards each other. Without trust, people's attitudes towards others are hostile, fearful, judgemental, contemptuous and isolationist. Non-acceptance, as a form of non-reciprocity or anti-reciprocity, excludes the person from the social community and the pleasures it may offer. It may create painful and stressful experiences such as discrimination (see McCormic 2009, Lindenberg *et al.* 2010). Although, if a group or community is too closed and has a strong sense of solidarity, it can harm individual members or even the whole society; cases of sectarianism, racism and corruption serve as examples. (Allardt 1976, pp. 37–38, 42–46).

In addition, different societies at different times have identified the nature of human beings as egoistic, altruistic or capable of acting for others. A number of researchers (Lindenberg 2010, p. 27, Lindenberg *et al.* 2010, p. 9; see also Fetchenhauer and Dunning 2010, p. 61) understand solidary behaviour as containing altruism since people help others in times of need, which entails some form of sacrifice. If people

have unselfish motives and reciprocity is not regulated, this can be called reciprocal altruism (Manatschal 2015, p. 235). However, if we continuously sacrifice ourselves or if we are only giving or only receiving, the relationship is not reciprocal. Such relationships can abuse the goodwill or kindness of the giving member. Such a non-reciprocal relationship does not conform to the norm of reciprocity.

On the societal level, non-reciprocity can violate human rights or the sovereignty of states or it can weaken other societies. The struggle between reciprocity and non-reciprocity is often visible in a society and in social interactions – for example, when people and members of communities treat each other very badly but still remain together, leading to a long-standing enmity between the involved parties (see Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000, Nussman 2011, p. 52). In addition, also goodness or badness can be divided into natural badness and moral badness. Accidents, pain and suffering in the world are parts of the natural order of nature and have a physical or biological basis, such as natural catastrophes or diseases. In contrast, other unfortunate or unpleasant events result from the human's wrong choices that hurt themselves or others. (Niiniluoto, pp. 141–142.) Although, also the natural catastrophes can be caused by human beings. This kind of division of reciprocity and non-reciprocity does not justify a multifaceted reality but instead helps us understand what supports our wellbeing and what does not.

The Multi-Disciplinary Concept of Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity applies to many different fields. It is widely used in economics, the social sciences (especially social anthropology), psychology and social psychology, psychiatry, biology, religious science and history. The concept itself is multi-disciplinary and even interdisciplinary, which highlights the varied ways in which the concept is applied. Different disciplines examine reciprocity on different levels as the interdependency among individuals, communities or societies.

Social work and social policy are tools to strengthen reciprocal relationships on both the personal and societal level based on the principles of the welfare state such as solidarity, equality and support for employment. Research into reciprocity in social work and social policy can be seen as a contribution to international social welfare research, which focuses on wellbeing and the communities that hold people together

(see Becker 1990, Ostrom and Walker 2003). Wellbeing describes individual experiences whereas welfare refers to the support offered for wellbeing regulated by the state and other public or private services and benefits. Wellbeing can be defined by the experiences of individuals and groups whereas welfare indicates the quality of life that is possible in that society. Reciprocal actions between individuals, communities and societies interact with one another as a result of which wellbeing and welfare are created.

Reciprocity, then, refers to the interpersonal social and power relations within communities and societies. The concept is, therefore, much broader than the 'interactions between people'; it includes emotional and evaluative functions. Kabunda (1987, p. 33) defines reciprocity as interdependency. Therefore, reciprocity can be seen as 'universal dependence on the judgment of others' (see Bourdieu 2000, p. 100) that impacts both parties emotionally, e.g. liking each other. Reciprocal acts are motivated by the feelings of solidarity and affinity between persons or different groups who are engaged in these acts and give them meaning and collective intentions. These acts connect people emotionally.

In social policy, the welfare state and institutions supplement the mutual support of individuals in a society. Regulations and norms define the citizens' responsibilities and duties but also their rights and privileges in a society. Similarly, in social work this means that people can feel that they can influence their own life, be important and feel respected (see Ojanen 2014, p. 313). They are supported when they need or ask for help and there are no expectations of direct exchange. At times also situations occur when professionals have to act in the best interest of the client. Therefore, reciprocity in social work can be seen as in relational social work, where the helping process and the development of wellbeing are co-constructions; the contributions of both the social worker or caregiver and also the client or the care recipient are essential. Ideally both are valued, supported and helped, and both are empowered by this system (Raineri and Cabiati 2015, p. 1, Thompson 2016, p. 14).

This understanding of reciprocity in relation to social work and social policy contributes to the research tradition of social capital, which looks at a change within communities and the way in which wellbeing is socially created (Bourdieu 1984, Coleman 1990, Putnam *et al.* 1994 Putnam 2000). Social capital refers to social

commitments and to the changes in the sense of solidarity and emotional connectedness. It echoes and enhances interpersonal, social and global relationships (Coleman 1990, p. 2, Putnam *et al.* 1994, p. 167).

Both of these traditions, reciprocity and social capital, are rooted in the idea that people are inclined and in fact need to live in organised groups that promote the wellbeing of the members (Tuomela and Mäkelä 2011, p. 88). Moreover, further aspects include helping the society to function and increase the happiness of the members and improve their health (Putnam *et al.* 1994, p. 169, Putnam 2000, p. 19, Kouvo 2010, p. 166). For instance, Tuomela and Mäkelä (2011, p. 88) claim that being social is the basis of human existence and is generally accepted by all people (see also Lindenberg and Steg 2007, Lindenberg *et al.* 2010). This trend reflects a strong collective intentionality – a ‘we’ mode that is at the core of social interactions (Tuomela and Mäkelä 2011, p. 90) and is connected to the collective wellbeing of individuals. Correspondingly, the social structures that maintain order and power cannot usually function without an authorisation from their citizens, who can offer their opinion, for instance, by voting or protesting.

In economics, reciprocity is associated with trading, selling and buying, and the theoretical approach to it is often based on an economic or a game theory (see Tuomela and Mäkelä 2011, p. 89). In the game theory, players follow certain rules and try to determine the best move (Becker 1990, p. 7). The game theory is based on rational choices and the probability of accountability; it highlights the disharmonious nature of reciprocity – the struggle between benevolence and calculations (Törrönen 2012, p. 185).

The usual goal of business negotiations includes financial benefits and growth. As for economics, and even the social sciences, many people hold strong opinions that highlight ‘against payment’ and reimbursements of benefits (see Kildal 2001, p. 2). Such views support the idea of man as an egoist, thinking only of his own benefit (see, for instance, Bierhoff and Fetchenhauer 2010, p. 226; Fetchenhauer and Dunning 2010, p. 72, Homans 1974). Paskov’s work (2016, pp. 4–5) serves as an example; she sees solidary actions as attempts to gain appreciation and honour or to elevate one’s social status. Mauss already had a similar viewpoint in the beginning of the 20th century, when he developed the idea of a gift, which is based on the research

conducted among certain tribes and on their exchange of gifts. Based on his anthropological research, he claims there are no disinterested gifts. He argues that every present or an act of honour is made for certain purposes to gain more acceptance and honour in the community (Mauss 2002).

Although recent global trends seem to strongly support this kind of egoistic understanding of human beings and their actions, many everyday experiences as well as research (see, for instance, Bierhoff and Fetchenhauer 2010, p. 226) also support the idea that people help and support each other without any immediate benefit. Becker (1990, p. 10) views reciprocity as a moral argument that does not offer the degree of precision required in mathematics. Sen (2009, pp. 32, 189) also underlines the importance of considering one's self-interest but also how the lives of others could be affected by one's actions.

Reciprocity is closely associated with several concepts from social psychology, such as 'sociability, social networks, social support, trust, community and civic engagement, helping and solidarity' (Morrow 1999, p. 744). Social support, then, is connected to reciprocity and can be defined as mutual or shared interventions or actions that have emotional, evaluative and informative dimensions. People who support each other, feel the reciprocal nature of their interactions and the way they are evaluated; the information they gain helps them to relate to others. Reciprocal relationships, including social support, make a person's existence more confident in the world.

Reciprocity is also similar to the multidisciplinary concept of solidarity used for instance in sociology when a society considers it important to help people in need, to support mutual wellness with acts of kindness, to trust others and to be fair (see Fetchenhauer and Dunning 2010, p. 61, Lindenberg *et al.* 2010, p. 3). Reciprocity demands a negotiable relationship with frequent mutual actions that improve the possibility of survival. Reciprocal acts may be ongoing, random or repeating, and their temporal dimension always has an impact on the partners' relationship. Acts of reciprocity when someone is in need or in crisis also contain temporal and solidary elements.

Nussbaum (2011, pp. 10–11) postulates from the philosophical point of view that when a child experiences vulnerability in various situations, she or he concurrently

develops a vivid imagination and learns about other people. Thinking and imagination enrich relationships. Through this process, children learn how to treat others as equals and understand the meaning of reciprocal actions; without this process, they would only use others for their own gain. Nussbaum claims that if the citizens of a democracy lack empathy, they are inevitably more likely to exclude and stigmatise outsiders. The political struggle for liberty and equality requires that empathy, love and respect triumph over fear, jealousy and self-centred hostility, as Mahatma Gandhi described in his ideals for building a democracy. (Nussbaum 2011, pp. 10–11, 20, 45, 165.)

Nussbaum's understanding of how humans grow in a democratic society incorporates psychological theories, especially the attachment theory (Bowlby 1997; see also Brazelton and Cramer 1991), wherein reciprocity is often linked to interpersonal relationships. Hazel (2007, p. 46) points out that in developmental psychology, the parent–child relationship can be described as a dance that has certain steps. Reciprocity is expressed in the rhythm of the dance and in the smiles that communicate acceptance and benevolence towards each other. This can also be seen as a game with predictable rules and two participants whose actions respond to the other's behaviour (Hazel 2007, p. 48).

The Dimensions of Reciprocity

Here power is understood as human beings who control each other and thus create boundaries: how the resources are divided in the world and between people (practical dimension), who are accepted as part of 'us' (symbolic dimension) and who have real possibilities to choose (moral dimension). This is based on the understanding that there are no empty systems or institutions but conversely there are people who lead the institutions and have the power to make decisions and people who follow their rules. On the other hand, we cannot exclude ourselves, since there are also responsibilities and rights in the society which include us, too.

We need resources with which our basic needs are satisfied (see for instance Maslow 1954), we need other people to share our life and make moral decisions which support our own and the community's wellbeing. These elements are called here 1) practical dimension, 2) symbolic dimension and 3) moral dimension which are combined with

resources, social bonds and moral actions. The dimensions create a multidimensional picture of our wellbeing. These dimensions overlap with each other, and address the equality of human beings in the material, social and moral senses and describe the kinds of inequalities individuals might encounter in everyday life.

Dimensions	Areas	Outcomes	Wellbeing
<i>Practical</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Survival and self-realisation</i>	<i>Material, physical and mental</i>
<i>Symbolic</i>	<i>Social bonding</i>	<i>Recognition Belonging Legitimation</i>	<i>Social and emotional</i>
<i>Moral</i>	<i>Moral actions</i>	<i>Choices</i>	<i>Existential</i>

Table 1: Practical, Symbolic and Moral Dimensions of Reciprocity

First, without resources like food, shelter or finances, we could not survive, much less thrive or self-realise. Secondly, in our social relationships we need to be recognised, have a feeling of belonging and that we have the opportunity and the entitlement to act in a society (legitimation). Thirdly, nevertheless, people as moral actors and within certain limits can affect their own lives and, at the same time, the wellbeing of others. These dimensions taken together affect our wellbeing materially, physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and existentially. The extent to which we can influence our own lives and make choices affects how we experience our existence in the world. Together, these three dimensions of reciprocity have profound ontological significance for individuals and for the function of communities.

These dimensions resemble the division of needs described by a Finnish sociologist Allardt (1980): *having*, *loving* and *being*, which describe wealth, social security and individual existence as sources for wellbeing (see Niiniluoto 2015, p. 190). This chapter suggests the following difference: reciprocity is not solely based on needs, resources or social bonds but it also includes an understanding of a human being as a social and moral actor (see Niemelä 2010, pp. 19, 29). How individuals, communities and societies interact and make commitments impacts on their wellbeing and the welfare of the communities as a whole.

Good social relationships, both interpersonal and intergenerational, are very important for the wellbeing of humans. That is the reason for adding the symbolic dimension

here (see also Törrönen 2015). If people take care of each other and are ready to commit to reciprocal acts, even love, and treat each other well, these increase their wellbeing. I share Goldberg's opinion (2012, pp. vi-vii, 1) that we depend on each other very much. We find our own place and meaning in the world based on our relationships with other people and on the human collectives that are close to us or that impact our lives. Our concept of our own place and meaning of our existence also depend on the understanding of how we are valued and recognised in these relationships and on how our actions are accepted and the consequent effect they have.

Practical Dimension

Historically, in social work and social policy, there has been an understanding that some problems are related to the uneven distribution or exchange of resources based on e.g. social status, wealth, gender, ethnic origin or religion. This gives rise to the following question: is the aim of sharing to reach equality or not? As Hawking (1.12.2016) puts it:

'Perhaps in a few hundred years, we will have established human colonies amid the stars, but right now we only have one planet, and we need to work together to protect it. To do that, we need to break down, not build up, barriers within and between nations. If we are to stand a chance of doing that, the world's leaders need to acknowledge that they have failed and are failing the many. With resources increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, we are going to have to learn to share far more than at present.'

The uneven distribution of power and wealth is understood to create inequality; people settle into hierarchical positions based on cultural, economic (Bourdieu 1984, [Bourdieu uses capital]) and health-related resources (Törrönen 2016, see also Törrönen 2014). These resources are affected by power relationships and structures. Such social structures include patriarchy, racism, capitalism and heterosexuality, which can be understood as primary structures. The secondary structures include family, community and bureaucracy, which includes the media, the educational system and the authorities (Carniol 1992, p. 5). The resources of the practical dimension are here cultural, economic and health resources. Examples of economic

resources include housing, work, subsistence and the standard of a home. Cultural resources include religion or ideology, education, family background and upbringing. Health contains both physical and mental health. Inequality demonstrates the differences in power relations created by differences regarding the division of labour and knowledge but also by differences in cultural habits and social norms that are considered valuable in a certain place and time.

Resources are used with respect to direct or indirect exchange, for instance when taking care of others or offering food or shelter. If they are equally shared, they give the individuals opportunities to satisfy their own needs and have the freedom to act. This is not self-evident, as Bourdieu puts it. He makes it clear that individuals cannot single-handedly determine the social position they attain or the level of freedom and equality in the society; there is an ongoing struggle for resources. In addition to resources, there are some practical rules that shape human behaviour. These rules determine the following aspects: who in a certain culture has the opportunity to participate and what is prioritised; what is permissible, valued or procedurally correct; and finally, how the rules are transformed or legitimised (Becker 1990, pp. 14–16).

Equality in a society depends on how the resources are shared, and what kind of a social and health care system exists, and how this system takes care of people in need and during difficult times, e.g. regarding people who are unemployed or immigrants. An uneven distribution of resources usually lies behind inequality, however, there are also other disparities that affect wellbeing. The growth of inequality reflects collective attitudes towards the causes of difficulties and diminishes reciprocal actions.

The practical dimension describes how the resources are shared in the communities. It does not sufficiently clarify the concept of reciprocity in all of its dimensions (see Becker 1990, pp. 14–16; Sen 2009, pp. 233, 253), we need to understand a human being also as a social creature.

Symbolic Dimension

The symbolic dimension addresses social and emotional wellbeing in making social bonds which can be described as social resources. It simultaneously illustrates the opinion formed by the majority and the power relationships in a society. It describes

how the members of the society are recognised and appreciated. Social bonds include intergenerational and other types of relationships. As Nussbaum (2011, p. 20) states, another human being should be met as a soul, not only as a useful tool or as an obstacle to one's own plans. The symbolic dimension represents collective involvement and acceptance of others—the social bonding that creates a personal experience of social status in a certain community.

Here, I have modified the symbolic dimension to include recognition, belonging and legitimisation, which I define similarly to Bourdieu's definition of symbolic power (see Törrönen 2015). Bourdieu (1990, p. 138) defines symbolic power, first, as the credit or power granted to those who have sufficient recognition to be in a position to recognise others and second, as the power to create things with words. Symbolic power contains elements of recognition and the justification for cooperative competition as a justification for existence, here called 'recognition', 'legitimation' and 'belonging' (or participation).

The symbolic dimension describes how reciprocal actions, interaction and cooperation with others support our wellbeing. Therefore, an individual existence is a combination of circumstances outside the individual's control and aspects the individual can influence (Heidegger 2000, pp. 31, 41, 158–159, 289). This interprets people as active actors, not just passive respondents, and thus their motives influence their actions (Törrönen 2016, pp. 44–48). Motives include the possible outcomes of an action based on one's values and priorities. Motives may be short-term or hedonistic ('to feel better right now'), long-term ('to improve one's resources') or normative ('to act appropriately') (Lindenberg 2010, p. 12), which helps explain why an individual's behaviour is sometimes difficult to predict, understand or grasp.

People do not only act with others, they want to be valued in these relationships. It creates in them a feeling to be collectively recognised. *Recognition* is connected to human dignity when feeling valued by certain people or communities. Metaphorically this refers to a person becoming visible 'in the eyes of others' (Pulkkinen 2002, p. 42). In Bourdieu's (2000) thinking, collective recognition is the fundamental existential goal for finding the meaning of life and the symbolic competition in lifestyles that maintains momentum in a society. The symbolic competition works to exclude or distinguish the social positions of people or communities in a power

struggle (see Bourdieu 1990, pp. 123, 128–129, 2000, pp. 134–135). The symbolic dimension includes the emotional experiences and identities that make some people, geographical areas, ideologies or religions more familiar, closer and emotionally more touching for a person or persons (see Törrönen 1999, p. 23, Tuan 1987, p. 29).

Sometimes it is enough if there is at least one person who sees one's worth. These experiences and identities tend to create social hierarchies or polarisations between people and are created in reflexive interactions with others in long-lasting processes.

The relations are built up with sympathy and antipathy. Bourdieu (1990, p. 128; see also Sen 2009, pp. xvii, 39) writes that sympathy and antipathy, as means of distinction and emotional experience, set the foundation for all forms of cooperation, friendship, love affairs, marriages and associations. Like-minded people can more easily understand one another; this includes the acceptance of common rules, practices and institutions. They are willing to meet expectations and share their experiences with others. This may take various forms: e.g. mutually shared opinions, controlling others, conciliation, negotiations, individual rights or respect (Azarian 2010, pp. 236–327). The social relations and mutual liking give rise to the sources of the symbolic competition that keeps society in an endless motion (see Gabriel 2011, p. 3). Such a competition refers to the legitimacy of one's existence, namely the individual right to feel justified in existing as one exists (Bourdieu 2000, p. 237).

Despite fellow human beings valuing and liking the person, he or she needs a feeling of *belonging*. It is a feeling of involvement and participation, of being connected to different social networks and other people through mutual obligations. It can also be a sense of emotional togetherness with a wider community based on e.g. suburb, nation, wealth, social class, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic background, generation, gender (see also Nussbaum 2011, p. 24), society or even a continent.

The interaction between members may strengthen the feeling of belonging together; it may also produce social ties, which makes life feel richer (Putnam 2000, p. 19). It is assumed that people return social support in proportion to their experience of receiving it in their communities (see Newcomb 1990), however, people can also give more or less than they have received. This means that not everything can be calculated by money or volume; instead, belonging to some type of social capital can be very important for one's wealth, work satisfaction, health and ability to participate

in a functioning democratic system (see Kouvo 2010, p. 166). Social capital supports the idea that well-functioning communities support the welfare of the whole society.

In addition to recognition and belonging, one's existence and obligations require a certain degree of collective acceptance and communal lawfulness. This can be called *legitimation*, which provides individuals with the opportunity and the entitlement to act in a society; it regulates the form and intensity of cooperation among people and communities. If people have clear intentions and consequently fulfil their obligations in fair arrangements, others tend to trust and have confidence in them (Sen 2009, p. 80). This clarifies the power relationships (see Sennett 2003) in a society and in communities, in other words who accepts and who is asking for acceptance.

The wellbeing of human beings is affected by the available resources in use and the nature of their social relationships but also the kinds of possibilities they have to choose from and make decisions concerning their own life. Moreover, we are moral actors, who simultaneously have certain rights and follow the collective orders to participate in a society or in a specific group but also consider how to meet the responsibilities in the society or community.

Moral Dimension

There is no universal consensus on moral norms. Moral norms are learned in a reflexive process from childhood to adulthood, for instance how the person respects other person's integrity or property. They also create tension between different actors because of (for example) religious or other ideological differences. The dominant moral obligations and codes, controlled by habits of thought, propensities to act and readiness to respond (Becker 1990, p. 37, see also Niiniluoto 2015, p. 178), in a society form the collective way of life. This way of life can be seen in the choices individuals make as moral actors. This does not mean that they totally choose the way of life; it shows that human beings have the moral capacity to think and choose. This dimension separates people from animals; the practical and symbolic dimensions of reciprocity, or something similar, can also be observed in some animal communities (see, for instance, Honkalinna 2015).

People are disposed towards reciprocity in social practices (Becker 1990, p. 17). If a person acts against the moral norms of the community, the person might feel guilty afterwards or lose honour or trust in the eyes of the community (Niiniluoto 2015, p. 179). When combined with moral responsibilities, reciprocity motivates people to act accordingly within a community. For instance, the employer usually pays the worker's salary not only because they have an agreement but also because the employer sees that the employee deserves it. The act of the employer can be understood as a responsibility but also as a repayment to the employee. The norm of reciprocity requires that you do your part when others have completed theirs. (Gouldner 1960, p. 175.) However, Gouldner (1960, p. 170) does not consider that the social practices completely explain human behaviour, e.g. the interdependence connected to the division of labour; an individual sense of moral considerations and reciprocal actions also have an influence.

Becker (1990, p. 17) claims that morality is not a question of a choice; it is a way of life in which what we do is what we ought to do. Becker views morality as comprising not only purposeful actions but also states of being that conform to moral judgments. He draws on a virtue theory, which is also called a moral theory, to justify his views on reciprocity. The moral theory defines and justifies a proper way of life and the manners that moral agents should use. Becker favours the general concept of morality: '*moral judgments are judgments about what rational agents ought to do or be...*' (Becker 1990, p. 17). According to his moral theory, the general idea of morality, together with hedonic values, underpins personal welfare and efficiency. According to this theory, the moral argument will favour the better option due to the valuation of rules. As noted by Becker, '*better, on any given scale, is preferable to worse*' (Becker 1990, pp. 16, 37, 45, 73–74).

In an ethical sense, moral rules tell us and oblige us how to behave and how to relate to other people and their communities. Morality is created inside human communities, while laws, in contrast, have a history and were created by specific people. Several optional norms can exist simultaneously in the moral dimension (Niiniluoto 2015, p. 179), which can create tension between individuals. Niiniluoto (2015, pp. 141–146) states that people are morally responsible to act according to the moral norms, which are reinforced by criminal laws that legally punish socially unacceptable acts. Moral norms are personal convictions and commitments; it is natural for people to seek their

own benefit as long as they do not harm others. On the other hand, selfish, greedy acts that do not take other people into account are immoral. Consequently, a moral attitude cannot be limited to self-advantage because it should consider other people as equals with oneself (*ibid.* pp. 141–146, 178–179).

Also one's personality impacts one's moral acts. We have persistent tendencies in acting, reacting and responding. Consequently, there are also positive and negative reciprocators. Positive reciprocators are highly reactive to other people's behaviour and are additionally concerned with joint outcomes. Negative reciprocators are seen as more reactive to exchanges, which involve the ability to punish the other or 'get even' in an interpersonal exchange (Van der Zee and Perugini 2010, pp. 87–88).

The individual preferences do not always correspond to their judgments about what to do and who to be. If they did, conflicting attitudes, feelings and preferences would be automatically resolved. Unfortunately, this is not possible. Individuals have different opinions about the same aspects, and their reasons and emotions may vary. Because our lives are full of competing aims, values, ideals and demands, which lead to the issue of prioritisation and because one is not completely pure at the level of the heart, one competes for resources. (Becker 1990, pp. 38–39; 42–44.)

Sen has pointed out a very crucial element for being in the world: the importance of the freedom to choose. Sen does not, however, believe that everyone has the freedom to choose his or her own life (Sen 2009, pp. 18–19, see also Sartre 1957, p. 15).

'The freedoms and capabilities we enjoy can also be valuable to us, and it is ultimately for us to decide how to use the freedom we have.' (Sen 2009, p. 19)

Sen's idea of freedom to choose is very important: The person has the freedom to choose if she in real life has that opportunity. How well we can make decisions concerning our own life impacts our wellbeing; how satisfied we may feel to follow our own aspirations and goals. Consequently, if we feel that we have the right to exist as we are, for instance we feel that others appreciate our work or our actions for the common wellbeing of our family, we can feel existential wellbeing. Unfortunately, this brings constant inner and outer contradictions into our lives. We have to try to continuously find a balance between our own wishes and the obligations with which we are encircled.

Conclusion

We are strongly interdependent on each other in everyday life and also in the way we understand our lives and the world around us (see Goldberg 2012, pp. vi–vii, 1). Reciprocal relationships support people with empowering feelings, such as love, empathy and resemblance and give them strength to be loyal. Reciprocal relationships strengthen one's overall wellbeing and give meaning to one's life. However, experiences contain both reciprocal and non-reciprocal actions, and an individual may also act differently in different contexts.

When people experience togetherness, they are willing to display good gestures towards other members of their group or the society. Reciprocity, therefore, can be understood as gestures or acts of goodwill that follow similar previous gestures or acts or alternatively are based on moral norms. Therefore, reciprocity can be seen as the prerequisite for life; it also maintains the obligations and ideals of communities and of social institutions and practices (Becker 1990, pp. 3–4). This kind of a structure is also observable in a society: do people feel togetherness in a society and are they willing to support each other?

I understand that our everyday life consists both of reciprocal and non-reciprocal experiences simultaneously. For instance, you may feel satisfied with some experiences in your own life but become worried about your friend's health or a crisis in your country. I agree with Gouldner (1960) that reciprocity is not only a kind of social interaction but the power that rules people and the world and regulates social behaviour. Globally, there seems to be a tendency to attribute experiences of good or bad to some persons or groups and the accumulation of wealth or impoverishment to other groups within a population. This keeps us in the on-going struggle to balance our wellbeing and find our own way of life in the jungle of reciprocal and non-reciprocal relationships. I have defined reciprocity and non-reciprocity as follows:

Reciprocity is the fundamental basis for human life and is connected to subjectively interpreted wellbeing but also to welfare which is offered by the society with its services and social security system. It is based on the understanding that human beings are interdependent, which gives them a feeling of quiet obligations to follow the social and moral norms of their communities. However, it contains acts of

sympathy and good will, which follow each other that are based on trust and can surpass individuality and reach out to strangers. Reciprocal relationships make people feel equal and heard; they impact one's own life situation. Reciprocal experiences are strongly associated with feelings of love, empathy, gratitude and satisfaction.

The opposite of reciprocity is non-reciprocity, which describes people's inequality in their communities which create negativity and antipathy towards each other and can take the form of extreme contempt, abuse, violation of human rights or even exploitation. At its weakest, it is nonchalance or indifference. Here people are more seen as individual actors or even competitors, who are accused when difficulties occur in their life, and moreover, inequality in the world is taken for granted. The relationships are built up with the hierarchy and paternalism. It creates situations in which people feel excluded, hurt, ignored and not heard. These kinds of situations generate anger, anxiety and helplessness.

The implications of reciprocal social work and social policy are that they clarify the importance of people's social relationships and commitments and can also examine their sense of solidarity and emotional connectedness (see Coleman 1990, p. 2, Putnam *et al.* 1994, p. 167). It may help to transform the individualistic services to a community empowerment which gives value for instance for peers and intergenerational relationships. Community work can mean reorganising services and their delivery but also voluntary help and support without always using money e.g. exchange of services, support, help or company. This means that one's own knowledge and experiences are taken more into account when developing new health and social services.

At the same time, there is a strong need to strengthen an equal income distribution and fair distribution of other resources and services which are ways of attaining societal reciprocity and maintaining status quo in societies; these objectives also support the individual wellbeing. People who are in difficult life situations especially need the support of the welfare state because they might have less possibilities for reciprocal acts. Consequently, society functions better when respect and appreciation are commonly expressed.

On the societal level, democracy can be considered as a prerequisite for the welfare of human communities. If the society follows the rules of democracy and supports reciprocal acts, it increases equality among citizens. The members of the society also have decent possibilities to care for each other not only practically but also emotionally. Sen (2009, p. xiii) eloquently expresses the idea of a just society that creates good opportunities for reciprocity and thus promotes individual wellbeing:

‘Democracy has to be judged not just by the institutions that formally exist but by the extent to which different voices from diverse sections of the people can actually be heard.’

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